



Providing Disease Prevention Services and Athletic Shoes to Low-Income Women Through the WISEWOMAN Program

Public Health Problem

Cardiovascular disease (CVD), mainly heart disease and stroke, is the leading cause of death in the United States and the number one health threat to women in Michigan. Improving nutrition and physical activity to reduce cardiovascular disease risk factors can be particularly challenging for low-income women, who typically have limited access to fitness centers, nutrition counseling, transportation, or fitness equipment.

Evidence That Prevention Works

Research has demonstrated that preventive measures such as improved nutrition, increased physical activity, and early detection and intervention can prevent heart disease and stroke and improve the health of women who already have CVD. In addition, the University of South Carolina Prevention Research Center found that reducing barriers to exercise increases the likelihood that people will engage in physical activity.

Program Example

CDC-funded WISEWOMAN programs provide additional preventive services to women participating in CDC's National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program. States use this established system and other partnerships to screen women for risk factors for heart disease and other chronic diseases, conduct nutrition and physical activity interventions, and provide referrals for medical care and smoking cessation as needed. In Michigan, WISEWOMAN staff used funds made available through the Lansing Area League of Women Voters to buy athletic shoes for low-income program participants.

WISEWOMAN staff also partnered with a conveniently located store that carries athletic shoes to allow selected participants to receive a quality pair of shoes through a discount and \$30 gift certificate combination. Each recipient was required to meet with a lifestyle counselor to set goals and complete a lifestyle contract. By eliminating one important barrier to physical activity (lack of appropriate equipment), the Ingham County Health Department helps WISEWOMAN participants to lead healthier lives.

Implications

Screening and lifestyle interventions that reduce barriers can improve the health of low-income women. The WISEWOMAN program demonstrates the importance of working with nontraditional partners to increase resources to help low-income participants reduce their risk for cardiovascular disease.

Contact Information

Michigan Department of Community Health • WISEWOMAN Program
3423 N. MLK Jr. Boulevard • Lansing, Michigan 48909
Phone: (517) 335-9966